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ABSTRACT

The economic situation has limited the number of teaching jobs available for physical education majors. The determination of priorities is essential in planning for a teaching job. As an alternative to teaching there are job possibilities in sport centers, commercial sport establishments, fitness salons, dance studios, and self-styled teaching opportunities. There is need for physical educators for the elderly and the atypical. The mass media also offer job possibilities. Research is needed on human activity patterns which can be done best by trained physical educators. Alternatives to teaching are numerous for those willing to seek them out. (Author/CD)

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PROFESSIONALISM - THE GAME SPIRIT

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Obviously, this is the wrong group of people to be talking with. You all have already demonstrated your concerns about your professional obligations. You are here. However, since it is impossible to talk with the people that are not here, let me use you as a sounding board for ideas dealing with professional obligations. Let's talk about your future and how the present will affect that future, then let me pose some questions to which you might wish to address yourself.

A great deal of your professional thrust as students is directed toward preparation for potential employment. You have come along at a difficult time. Jobs are not as plentiful as they once were and it is now an employer's market. So many of you are already worried and scared about the future.

There are some assets in having grown up during the great depression and having lived through the holocaust of a global war. Those events tend to suggest that things have to be pretty bad before you will admit that anything like a crisis is at hand. They also tend

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to remind you that in spite of all the times that you were sure that the worst was at hand, the next day you realized that yesterday was not "the worst". Having been a part of that extreme state of despair, gives you a wider and longer point of view -- not necessarily an optimistic point of view - but definitely not a pessimistic one.

Thus, professionally, I find myself not as frightened or as apprehensive as some of you because I have been there. And lest you believe that your mentors "have it made", let me remind you that there are always energetic and innovative young people waiting in line who are more than willing to help give you a shove once you begin to falter. I don't mean to suggest that there are not problems with regard to today's job market, or that those problems are not having a very real effect upon your future, but I am suggesting that maybe the problems seem larger than they really are and maybe there are many solutions which you have not explored because you have never had to explore alternatives and you have never had to really plan for the future.

Lots of times our real mettle is not tested until we have had to learn to cope with a situation for which we were not prepared. And

so it may be for you today. Learning to cope does separate the milk from the cream in the centrifuge of experience, and most of us learn things about self which we might never have suspected as we attempt to react to situations where no answers are known. Some of us become more of what we are and others among us become more than what we now are. Which will it be for you?

So, let us explore some of the possibilities which might lie ahead of you and let us see if it is not possible to set up viable alternatives which will make possible for each of you the possibility of crisis control and the establishment of the game spirit of professionalism.

It is important to reexplore your gut reasons for becoming a part of physical education. For most of you, I will bet, it was not the idea that you would be able to make a great deal of money by majoring in physical education. Except for a very few individuals, neither coaching nor teaching is a way to become wealthy. Most of you did not become a part of physical education because it was a high status area - as a matter of fact, I would be willing to wager that large numbers of you have taken a lot of "guff" because of your choice of physical

education and athletics as major areas of concentration. This is especially possible if you have a very high grade point average and/or if you are female.

Most of us chose physical education because it gives us a chance to be active, it gives us a chance to work with people, and it gives us a chance to find ourselves through movement experiences. And it is to these facets which you must be attentive as you look to see if you can cope with the career crisis. If you can find ways to employ the rationale which brought you into this field, you'll be on your way.

First of all, let's talk about the job market in education since that is the avenue that most of you expect to explore as far as potential employment is concerned. There are jobs available. People retire, people quit, people die and those events create openings which are available for replacement. It is true that the job market of five years ago which was created because staffs were adding personnel is not as large - not many additional jobs are being created. But there are still numbers of replacement jobs which are open and for which you have just as much chance as the next person. In addition, if you have something that is really worth selling and create a need for it in the

education system, a new job will still be created.

Because it is an employer's market, the people that are doing the hiring can afford to be choosey and they are going to choose the best among you. What are the employers looking for as they scan your credentials? We are looking for some evidence that you are intellectually curious; we are looking for the sort of skills you have in interpersonal communications; we are watching to see how often you went that extra mile - did the thing that you didn't have to do because you thought that it might be a way to enrich your experiences. We look at your record - it does tell us a great deal even though it is not the whole story. Few people look for the straight "A" average, but we do look for reasonable success in your undertakings. We expect some average grades, but we are also hoping for a degree of excellence in some aspects of your work. We look to see if you have matured in your scholastic achievement, if you have elected courses which strengthen your weaknesses and add to your scope. We look to see how you do in the arts of communication. We can't afford to have people who do not use their own language well attempting to interpret physical education to a group of erudite students, parents, administrators and fellow

educators. So your grade point average does make some difference, but it isn't the full story.

Employers also look at your references. They are interested to see how you are evaluated by your mentors. It is wise to have as references people who you believe are "on your side", but who you also believe will tell the truth about you. Nothing turns me off quite so fast as to see references which suggest that the candidate is a perfected paragon of virtue. I have lived long enough and worked long enough to believe that there is no such person. I am looking for candidates who have strengths, and who have the respect of their mentors, but candidates who are human, and have weaknesses and omissions in their personality make-up. I am not afraid of flaws that experience will correct and that empathy and compassion will ameliorate. Few employers are frightened off by candidates who are human - they are more often frightened off by unbelievable perfection.

Your record of activities beyond the confines of class assignments is an important input into the evaluation of your potential. Employers still look for what you do professionally when you are a free agent. This record is not ascertained as much through statements on your

reference credentials as it is in interview. We are seeking young professionals who care about what they have chosen to do. Do you take the time, effort and money to extend your own professional horizons outside of the class situation? Officiating, coaching, convention attendance, workshop participation, writing and speaking are just the beginning of a myriad of ways in which you can enrich your professional understandings. People like you have already made that commitment - that is evident since you are here - but it is a commitment which is a continuing one - it can't afford to be a "one shot deal". At some point you will be giving as much as you receive and at a later point, you will be giving more than you receive. But that interaction is enriching.

One other thing about the seeking of jobs in education. It is essential that you know what you want and what you are willing to do. If you have never done so, sit down and make out a list of the minimum essentials which you would wish to have in a teaching job. Section of the country, size of the school, kind of school, minimum salary, subject matter opportunities; and then having made those specifications, put them in priority listing. Decide on those items where you can afford

to be flexible. The chances of your finding the perfect job, the one which is absolutely tailored to your needs are slim. The opportunities of you finding a job which will meet some of your hopes and dreams and still not meet all of them are exceedingly good. Most of you can afford to be much more flexible than you are - you have to start adopting such an attitude now.

Certainly it might be nice to be teaching in your home town at a salary of $10,000 and teaching the very subjects that you feel most proficient in. But teaching in South Dakota or Arizona, or Rhode Island or Alabama can also be exciting. And teaching in the middle school, the elementary school, the junior high, or a private K-12 school can be challenging. Or it might be possible to get along with $7,500 a year and ride a bike instead of driving a car. And certainly you can teach lacrosse - you don't have to have had a course in lacrosse; you can teach dance - maybe it wasn't your favorite, but you can grow to like it. Be flexible in your expectations, and many, many more jobs are available. Flexibility is a part of the game spirit.

There used to be a time, less than a decade ago, when schools were glad to have warm bodies as teachers and anyone who didn't know what to

do could find a teaching job regardless of credentials. But that time is no more and schools are picking the best of the graduates - the ones who are intellectually curious, have good interaction talents and who are willing to go the extra mile without complaining, without becoming a martyr, and without expecting to be paid for every second spent outside of the confines of the school building. Now let me state unequivocally, that I am in favor of teachers seeking supplements for additional educational services, but I am not in favor of teachers seeking supplements for every task that they perform outside of the school day. Education and our commitment to it does not stop at the end of the school day. Going beyond what is expected is a part of professionalism - the game spirit.

So, what I am emphasizing is that there are still jobs in education for those of you who desire them and who represent real quality in your professional credentials. After you get the job, you are still very much on the evaluation platform, and if you do not measure up to your credentials, it is relatively easy these days not to renew contracts. There are lines of young people waiting for you to falter.

But what if education is not your "bag" or if your expectations are such that you cannot find a position to accommodate your dreams. What else is there to do? Plenty! But in this case you are going to have to use your imagination as well as demonstrate inventiveness and tenacity. Look back to the reasons why you selected physical education as an area of study and then see how some of those reasons can be accommodated outside of education.

There are still lots of people who like activity and who find ways to be active outside of the school curriculum. There are all sorts of sport centers, there are bowling lanes, golf courses, tennis courts, fitness salons. All of these places need help. For the most part these places have been staffed with personnel who know very little about the actual activity or about human involvement in activity, and some of us in physical education pose a threat to the present staffing population. But I cannot help but believe that if we put our energy and verve to the task of improving the opportunities at the sports centers, the fitness salons, and the dance studios of this country that we might be able to bring about a minor revolution with regard to the understanding of human movement patterns.

One of our graduate students in North Carolina put an ad in the paper to teach tennis to housewives in the hours before noon. The problems regarding use of the municipal courts were minimal at that hour, and the response of the women was enthusiastic and great. When baby-sitting services were added to that plan, the graduate student had more students than she could handle and made enough money to sponsor her graduate education. Another young physical educator I know hired himself out to the local bowling lanes to teach children to bowl on Saturday morning. Soon he was inundated with requests for lessons by other members of the community. Countless dance majors I have known have opened their own studios and attracted the clientele of the community who certainly did not need to be coerced into seeking the services offered - instead, they tended to be grateful. Now, any input we make in these highly commercial ventures has to be thought out carefully. A great deal of emphasis has to be put on an understandable product - one that can be measured and one for which we are accountable. If you pay for bowling lessons, you expect to learn how to bowl; if you pay for golf lessons, you want to be able to hit the ball - and teaching for a product that can be measured in terms of skilled performance may be a far cry from the school's mission of teaching for self actualization.

In addition, there are many, many opportunities to help people understand the importance of activity to their total being. In those places where really good fitness camps have been set up (usually for young boys) and have been staffed by thoughtful and enthusiastic young professionals, the idea has been received with alacrity on the part of the community. I would refer you to the programs at the University of Oregon and the University of Illinois to name only two. Such a program need not have a university orientation - you could organize it. There are so many untapped publics who are waiting for you. Very little has been done for girls and they want to have opportunities to be active and learn about their bodies - and their problems are quite different from their brothers - so that opens up a whole new possibility for you.

The elderly in learning to age gracefully still want to be active and as I watch the eager enthusiasm of the elderly with regard to planned activity, my heart cries out. It is tragic that we have not accepted the opportunities offered by this age group long before now. Some of our staff and graduate students have "helped out" in several of the condiminiums set up for our elder citizens in Greensboro and the response has been exciting. Organized walking tours have been undertaken, a physical fitness

trek has been set up which involves walking up stairs, up and down corriders and around parking lots. To many of you, a gold star for completing a fifty mile course within a month may not seem like a "big deal", but when you are 80 and lots of people have forgotten about you, and you are convinced that you have been put on the shelf, a gold star may be an introduction to a whole new life. We are going to have to convince "rest homes" that the best thing for their patients is activity instead of rest and we are going to have to learn of new ways to teach - but it can be done if we dare to do it - and there is a job in it!

Another group of people almost untouched by activity programs involves women who are pregnant. At the onset of pregnancy, most women are willing to do almost anything that will help them with their delivery and will help them restore their shape after their pregnancy has been terminated. For the most part, physical educators have ostracized pregnant women with respect to activity programs. I assume the supposition that abortion can be augmented by a strenuous activity program was the reason. But fortunately, we are beyond that old wives tale in our understanding of gestation and childbirth and we now know that activity is absolutely essential to a healthy pregnancy. Why not organize

"clinics" for those who are pregnant - clinics which teach carefully designed exercise programs and which cater to understandings regarding childbearing which, in turn, will enable young women to understand and participate in their own pregnancy and delivery in significant ways. This opportunity is really pregnant with possibilities if we would only take the initiative.

There are many other environments outside of the school which offer potential for young, energetic physical educators. Camps, day camps and playground organizations are in desperate need of revival. We are going to have to look at different forms for today's young people than the "rubbing two sticks together" approach which I so enjoyed as a girl. Already some of the trailer parks are capitalizing on family camping and as families move into motel complexes for a vacation, there is the possibility of setting up activity programs within that leisure time design. Maybe we are at a place where the tenets of the Turnverein movement are again appropo - and they need to be packaged in an attractive new wrapping which has significance to the last part of the 20th century.

Outside of the teaching of activities, there are many other opportunities available. These are opportunities which you will have to structure and then convince someone that they are necessary. The use

of the public media has hardly been approached by physical educators. Former athletes are much quicker than we are about jumping into the broadcast jobs, the sports reporting jobs, the T.V. commentator jobs. We need people in those positions who not only write well, but really have a basic understanding about what they are reviewing. There are certainly a paucity of people who fit this description in the public media today. Almost none as far as women are concerned. To be adapt in this area, you have to have linguistic skills as well as motor skills, but there are some among you who possess those talents - you just have learn how to exercise them. There are two magazines which cater to sports news regarding women and there are a host which are especially attentive to males.

Newspapers always need really good sports reporters. Radio and TV is a little harder to break into, but there are opportunities there also. You may not start out on the national networks - but almost any of us would be an improvement on Cossell or Casal.

I believe there is a place for what I will call a "lending center" for sport equipment. Just as people check out books from municipal libraries, it occurs to me that it might be possible for municipalities

to set up sport centers - mobile centers which check out equipment to the individuals in the community for a period of time. We would have to organize such a scheme and then convince city hall - but it could be done.

For those of you who are mesmerized with research, there are jobs with firms who are interested in human activity patterns. The textile firms are interested in clothing for activity, some of the drug companies are interested in the physiological outcomes of activity, equipment companies are interested in the manufacture of more and better equipment, and educational research is interested in the production of teaching-learning materials which will ameliorate the education process. There is a place in all of that research for the well-prepared educator.

In the professional scope of sport, scouts, trainers, coaches and front office personnel are all needed. These could be physical educators if we would take the initiative to move in that direction. The baseball organization runs its own college - and we could be a part of that scheme for other sport organizations.

The service organizations which are characterized by the "Y's", the youth agencies, the Jay Cees are all in need of personnel. It could be

you. Many industrial firms are attempting to provide organized recreational activities for their personnel and have purchased recreation centers to accommodate this plan. You could be organizing and working with this program.

Although the times are not flush with regard to career opportunities, there are still many opportunities. The crisis is in our analysis of fear rather than the actuality of the situation. And behind your potential is always the professional attitude with which you meet the situation.

If there is a crisis for you, it may be that you have not looked to alternative patterns. Can you cope? You bet your life you can. To adjust has been physical educators' patterns throughout our history and we can use it now.

There will be many of us helping you when we can. We'll do it by example, we'll do it by creating situations, we'll do it by having faith in your abilities and your potential. Professionalism is a viable way of life. It is the game spirit.